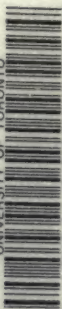


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THE GOVERNMENT
IN THE CHICAGO STRIKE

GROVER CLEVELAND

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THE GOVERNMENT IN THE CHICAGO
STRIKE OF 1894

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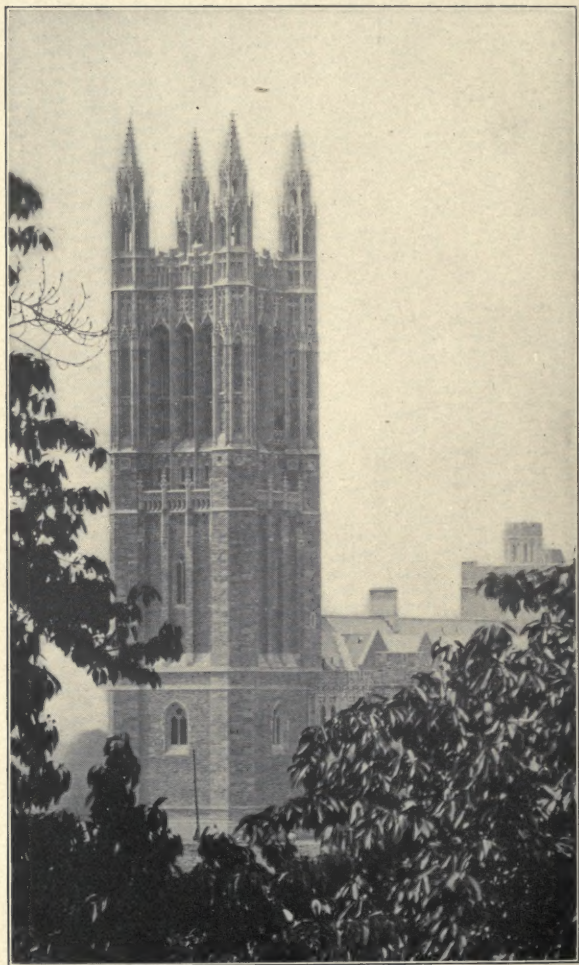
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GRADUATE COLLEGE
PRINCETON

THE GOVERNMENT IN THE
CHICAGO STRIKE OF 1894

BY
GROVER CLEVELAND

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
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PREFATORY NOTE

President Cleveland first visited Princeton at the time of the Sesquicentennial Celebration and made the chief address of that occasion on October 22, 1896. A few months later he retired from the Presidency and made Princeton his home for the remaining eleven years of his life. For the last seven of these years he served as Trustee of Princeton University and for the closing four years also acted as Chairman of the Committee on the Graduate School having special charge of the project for the residential Graduate College. He died on June 24, 1908, and was buried, as he desired, in his family plot in Princeton. By express provision of his will the only monument to mark his grave was to be the simple one which has already been erected.

Shortly after Mr. Cleveland came to live in Princeton it was proposed to found a Lecture-ship on Public Affairs in his honor. In the

early summer of 1899 Mr. Henry Stafford Little, an alumnus of the University, endowed the lectureship and expressed the hope that Mr. Cleveland would consent to hold it, or at any rate to be the first incumbent. Mr. Cleveland was reluctant to undertake any new work at that time, but on receiving special word from Mr. Little, who was then critically ill, agreed to prepare an address for the next year.

On April 9 and 10, 1900, every seat in Alexander Hall was taken and there were throngs standing to hear his two addresses on "The Independence of the Executive." The next spring he lectured twice on "The Venezuelan Boundary Question." For the next two years there were no lectures, and in 1904 Mr. Cleveland read one lecture on "The Government in the Chicago Strike." He always had crowded audiences, both for himself and the grave importance of the questions he treated. He was heard with the closest attention and repeatedly welcomed with affectionate enthusiasm.

Seventeen years ago to the day since Mr. Cleveland first spoke in Princeton, his Prince-

ton lectures are now republished in expanded form on the day of the dedication of the Graduate College he so strongly supported and did not live to see realized, and also the dedication day of the Cleveland Memorial Tower, erected by national subscription and built into the Graduate College for which he labored.

The lectures here reprinted are disclosures of the meaning of important happenings in our national history. They are even more; for they make clear as light that plain, strict, unswerving and unaffected honesty which was the vigorous central power in Grover Cleveland's life. It is well his words should be heard again at the time we gather to dedicate his national monument.

ANDREW F. WEST.

The Graduate College
Princeton University
October 22, 1913

THE GOVERNMENT IN THE CHICAGO STRIKE OF 1894

I


The President inaugurated on the fourth day of March, 1893, and those associated with him as Cabinet officials, encountered, during their term of executive duty, unusual and especially perplexing difficulties. The members of that administration who still survive, in recalling the events of this laborious service, cannot fail to fix upon the years 1894 and 1895 as the most troublous and anxious of their incumbency. During those years unhappy currency complications compelled executive resort to heroic treatment for the preservation of our nation's financial integrity, and forced upon the administration a constant, unrelenting struggle for sound money; a long and persistent executive effort to accomplish beneficent and satisfactory tariff reform so nearly mis-

carried as to bring depression and disappointment to the verge of discouragement; and it was at the close of the year 1895 that executive insistence upon the Monroe Doctrine culminated in a situation that gave birth to solemn thoughts of war. Without attempting to complete the list of troubles and embarrassments that beset the administration during these luckless years, I have reserved for separate and more detailed treatment one of its incidents not yet mentioned, which immensely increased executive anxiety and foreboded the most calamitous and far-reaching consequences.

In the last days of June, 1894, a very determined and ugly labor disturbance broke out in the city of Chicago. Almost in a night it grew to full proportions of malevolence and danger. Rioting and violence were its early accompaniments; and it spread so swiftly that within a few days it had reached nearly the entire Western and Southwestern sections of our country. Railroad transportation was especially involved in its attacks. The carriage of United States

mails was interrupted, interstate commerce was obstructed, and railroad property was riotously destroyed.

This disturbance is often called "The Chicago Strike." It is true that its beginning was in that city; and the headquarters of those who inaugurated it and directed its operations were located there; but the name thus given to it is an entire misnomer so far as it applies to the scope and reach of the trouble. Railroad operations were more or less affected in twenty-seven States and Territories; and in all these the interposition of the general Government was to a greater or less extent invoked.



This wide-spread trouble had its inception in a strike by the employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company, a corporation located and doing business at the town of Pullman, which is within the limits of the city of Chicago. This company was a manufacturing corporation—or at least it was not a railroad corporation. Its main object was the opera-

tion and running of sleeping- and parlor-cars upon railroads under written contracts; but its charter contemplated the manufacture of cars as well; and soon after its incorporation it began the manufacture of its own cars and, subsequently, the manufacture of cars for the general market.

The strike on the part of the employees of this company began on the eleventh day of May, 1894, and was provoked by a reduction of wages.

The American Railway Union was organized in the summer of 1893. It was professedly an association of all the different classes of railway employees. In its scope and intent it was the most compact and effective organization of the kind ever attempted. Its purpose was a thorough unification of defensive and offensive effort among railway employees under one central direction, and the creation of a combination embracing all such employees, which should make the grievances of any section of its membership a common cause. Those promi-

ment in this project estimated that various other organizations of railroad employees then existing had a membership of 102,000 in the United States and neighboring countries; and they claimed that these brotherhoods, because of divided councils and for other reasons, were ineffective, and that nearly 1,000,000 railroad employees still remained unorganized.

The wonderful growth of this new combination is made apparent by the fact that between the month of August, 1893, and the time it became involved in the Pullman strike, in June, 1894, it had enrolled nearly 150,000 members.

The employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company could not on any reasonable and consistent theory be regarded as eligible to membership in an organization devoted to the interests of railway employees; and yet, during the months of March, April, and May, 1894, it appears that nearly 4000 of these employees were enrolled in the American Railway Union.

This, to say the least of it, was an exceedingly unfortunate proceeding, since it created a

situation which implicated in a comparatively insignificant quarrel between the managers of an industrial establishment and their workmen the large army of the Railway Union. It was the membership of these workmen in the Railway Union, and the union's consequent assumption of their quarrel, that gave it the proportions of a tremendous disturbance, paralyzing the most important business interests, obstructing the functions of the Government, and disturbing social peace and order.

No injury to the property of the Pullman Palace Car Company was done or attempted while the strike was confined to its employees; and during that time very little disorder of any kind occurred.

It so happened, however, that in June, 1894, after the strike at Pullman had continued for about one month, a regular stated convention of the American Railway Union was held in the city of Chicago, which was attended by delegates from local branches of the organization in different States, as well as by represen-

tatives of its members among the employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company. At this convention the trouble at Pullman was considered, and after earnest efforts on the part of the Railway Union to bring about a settlement, a resolution was, on the twenty-second day of June, passed by the convention, declaring that unless the Pullman Palace Car Company should adjust the grievances of its employees before noon of the twenty-sixth day of June, the members of the American Railway Union would, after that date, refuse to handle Pullman cars and equipment.

The twenty-sixth day of June arrived without any change in the attitude of the parties to the Pullman controversy; and thereupon the order made by the American Railway Union forbidding the handling of Pullman cars, became operative throughout its entire membership.

At this time the Pullman Palace Car Company was furnishing drawing-room and sleeping-car accommodations to the traveling public

under contracts with numerous railway companies, and was covering by this service about one hundred and twenty-five thousand miles of railway, or approximately three fourths of all the railroad mileage of the country. The same railroad companies which had contracted to use these Pullman cars upon their lines had contracts with the United States Government for the carriage of mails, and were, of course, also largely engaged in interstate commerce. It need hardly be said that, of necessity, the trains on which the mails were carried and which served the purpose of interstate commerce were, very generally, those to which the Pullman cars were also attached.

The president of the Railway Union was one Eugene V. Debs. In a sworn statement afterward made he gave the following description of the results of the interference of the union in the Pullman dispute:

The employees, obedient to the order of the convention, at once, on the 26th, refused to haul

Pullman cars. The switchmen, in the first place, refused to attach a Pullman car to a train, and that is where the trouble began; and then, when a switchman would be discharged for that, they would all simultaneously quit, as they had agreed to do. One department after another was involved until the Illinois Central was practically paralyzed, and the Rock Island and other roads in their turn. Up to the first day of July, or after the strike had been in progress five days, the railway managers, as we believe, were completely defeated. Their immediate resources were exhausted, their properties were paralyzed, and they were unable to operate their trains. Our men were intact at every point, firm, quiet, and yet determined, and no sign of violence or disorder anywhere. That was the condition on the thirtieth day of June and the first day of July.

The officers of the Railway Union from their headquarters in the city of Chicago gave directions for the maintenance and management of the strike, which were quickly trans-

mitted to distant railroad points and were there promptly executed. As early as the 28th of June, two days after the beginning of the strike ordered by the Railway Union at Chicago, information was received at Washington from the Post-Office Department that on the Southern Pacific System, between Portland and San Francisco, Ogden and San Francisco, and Los Angeles and San Francisco, the mails were completely obstructed, and that the strikers refused to permit trains to which Pullman cars were attached to run over the lines mentioned. Thereupon Attorney-General Olney immediately sent the following telegraphic despatch to the United States district attorneys in the State of California:

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 28, 1894.

See that the passage of regular trains, carrying United States mails in the usual and ordinary way, as contemplated by the act of Congress and directed by the Postmaster-General, is not obstructed. Procure warrants or any other

available process from United States courts against any and all persons engaged in such obstructions, and direct the marshal to execute the same by such number of deputies or such posse as may be necessary.

On the same day, and during a number of days immediately following, complaints of a similar character, sometimes accompanied by charges of forcible seizure of trains and other violent disorders, poured in upon the Attorney-General from all parts of the West and Southwest. These complaints came from post-office officials, from United States marshals and district attorneys, from railroad managers, and from other officials and private citizens. In all cases of substantial representation of interference with the carriage of mails, a despatch identical with that already quoted was sent by the Attorney-General to the United States district attorneys in the disturbed localities; and this was supplemented, whenever necessary, by such other prompt action as the different emergencies required.

I shall not enter upon an enumeration of all the disorders and violence, the defiance of law and authority, and the obstructions of national functions and duties, which occurred in many localities as a consequence of this labor contention, thus tremendously reinforced and completely under way. It is my especial purpose to review the action taken by the Government for the maintenance of its own authority and the protection of the interests intrusted to its keeping, so far as they were endangered by this disturbance; and I do not intend to specifically deal with the incidents of the strike except in so far as a reference to them may be necessary to show conditions which not only justified but actually obliged the Government to resort to stern and unusual measures in the assertion of its prerogatives.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the city of Chicago was the birthplace of the disturbance and the home of its activities, and because it was the field of its most pronounced and malign manifestations, as well as the place of its final ex-

tion, I shall meet the needs of my subject if I supplement what has been already said by a recital of events occurring at this central point. In doing this, I shall liberally embody documents, orders, instructions, and reports which I hope will not prove tiresome, since they supply the facts I desire to present, at first hand and more impressively than they could be presented by any words of mine.

Owing to the enforced relationship of Chicago to the strike which started within its borders, and because of its importance as a center of railway traffic, Government officials at Washington were not surprised by the early and persistent complaints of mail and interstate commerce obstructions which reached them from that city. It was from the first anticipated that this would be the seat of the most serious complications, and the place where the strong arm of the law would be most needed. In these circumstances it would have been a criminal neglect of duty if those charged with the protection of governmental agencies and

the enforcement of orderly obedience and submission to Federal authority, had been remiss in preparations for any emergency in that quarter.

On the thirtieth day of June the district attorney at Chicago reported by telegraph that mail trains in the suburbs of Chicago were, on the previous night, stopped by strikers, that an engine had been cut off and disabled, and that conditions were growing more and more likely to culminate in the stoppage of all trains; and he recommended that the marshal be authorized to employ a force of special deputies who should be placed on trains to protect mails and detect the parties guilty of such interference. In reply to this despatch Attorney-General Olney on the same day authorized the marshal to employ additional deputies as suggested, and designated Edwin Walker, an able and prominent attorney in Chicago, as special counsel for the Government, to assist the district attorney in any legal proceedings that might be instituted. He also notified the district attor-

ney of the steps thus taken, and enjoined upon him that "action ought to be prompt and vigorous," and also directed him to confer with the special counsel who had been employed. In a letter of the same date addressed to this special counsel, the Attorney-General, in making suggestions concerning legal proceedings, wrote: "It has seemed to me that if the rights of the United States were vigorously asserted in Chicago, the origin and center of the demonstration, the result would be to make it a failure everywhere else, and to prevent its spread over the entire country"; and in that connection he indicated that it might be advisable, instead of relying entirely upon warrants issued under criminal statutes against persons actually guilty of the offense of obstructing the United States mails, to apply to the courts for injunctions which would restrain and prevent any attempt to commit such offense. This suggestion contemplated the inauguration of legal proceedings in a regular and usual way to restrain those prominently concerned in the interfer-

ence with the mails and the obstruction of interstate commerce, basing such proceedings on the proposition that, under the Constitution and laws, these subjects were in the exclusive care of the Government of the United States, and that for their protection the Federal courts were competent under general principles of law to intervene by injunction; and on the further ground that under an act of Congress, passed July 2, 1890, conspiracies in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States were declared to be illegal, and the circuit courts of the United States were therein expressly given jurisdiction to prevent and restrain such conspiracies.

On the first day of July the district attorney reported to the Attorney-General that he was preparing a bill of complaint to be presented to the court the next day, on an application for an injunction. He further reported that very little mail and no freight was moving, that the marshal was using all his force to prevent riots and the obstruction of tracks, and that

this force was clearly inadequate. On the same day the marshal reported that the situation was desperate, that he had sworn in over four hundred deputies, that many more would be required to protect mail trains, and that he expected great trouble the next day. He further expressed the opinion that one hundred riot guns were needed.

Upon the receipt of these reports, and anticipating an attempt to serve injunctions on the following day, the Attorney-General immediately sent a despatch to the district attorney directing him to report at once if the process of the court should be resisted by such force as the marshal could not overcome, and suggesting that the United States judge should join in such report. He at the same time sent a despatch to the special counsel requesting him to report his view of the situation as early as the forenoon of the next day.

In explanation of these two despatches it should here be said that the desperate character of this disturbance was not in the least under-

estimated by executive officials at Washington; and it must be borne in mind that while menacing conditions were moving swiftly and accumulating at Chicago, like conditions, inspired and supported from that central point, existed in many other places within the area of the strike's contagion.

Of course it was hoped by those charged with the responsibility of dealing with the situation, that a direct assertion of authority by the marshal and a resort to the restraining power of the courts would prove sufficient for the emergency. Notwithstanding, however, an anxious desire to avoid measures more radical, the fact had not been overlooked that a contingency might occur which would compel a resort to military force. The key to these despatches of the Attorney-General is found in the determination of the Federal authorities to overcome by any lawful and constitutional means all resistance to governmental functions as related to the transportation of mails, the operation of interstate commerce, and the pre-

servation of the property of the United States. The Constitution requires that the United States shall protect each of the States against invasion, "and on application of the legislature, or of the executive (when the legislature cannot be convened), against domestic violence." There was plenty of domestic violence in the city of Chicago and in the State of Illinois during the early days of July, 1894; but no application was made to the Federal Government for assistance. It was probably a very fortunate circumstance that the presence of United States soldiers in Chicago at that time did not depend upon the request or desire of Governor Altgeld.

Section 5298 of the Revised Statutes of the United States provides: "Whenever, by reason of unlawful obstructions, combinations or assemblages of persons, or rebellion against the authority of the United States, it shall become impracticable in the judgment of the President to enforce, by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, the laws of the United

States within any State or Territory, it shall be lawful for the President to call forth the militia of any or all of the States, and to employ such parts of the land or naval forces of the United States as he may deem necessary to enforce the faithful execution of the laws of the United States, or to suppress such rebellion, in whatever State or Territory thereof the laws of the United States may be forcibly opposed, or the execution thereof be forcibly obstructed"; and Section 5299 provides: "Whenever any insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combinations or conspiracies in any State . . . opposes or obstructs the laws of the United States, or the due execution thereof, or impedes or obstructs the due course of justice under the same, it shall be lawful for the President, and it shall be his duty, to take such measures, by the employment of the militia, or the land and naval forces of the United States, or of either, or by other means as he may deem necessary, for the suppression of such insurrection, domestic violence or combinations."

II

It was the intention of the Attorney-General to suggest in these despatches that immediate and authoritative information should be given to the Washington authorities if a time should arrive when, under the sanction of general executive authority, or the constitutional and statutory provisions above quoted, a military force would be necessary at the scene of disturbance.

On the 2d of July, the day after these despatches were sent, information was received from the district attorney and special counsel that a sweeping injunction had been granted against Eugene V. Debs, president of the American Railway Union, and other officials of that organization, together with parties whose names were unknown, and that the writs would be served that afternoon. The special counsel also expressed the opinion that it would require Government troops to enforce the orders

of the court and protect the transportation of mails.

Major-General Schofield was then in command of the army; and, after a consultation with him, in which the Attorney-General and the Secretary of War took part, I directed the issuance of the following order by telegraph to General Nelson A. Miles, in command of the Military Department of Missouri, with headquarters at Chicago:

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY.

WASHINGTON, July 2, 1894.

*To the Commanding-General,
Department of Missouri,
Chicago, Ill.*

You will please make all necessary arrangements confidentially for the transportation of the entire garrison at Fort Sheridan—infantry, cavalry, and artillery—to the lake front in the city of Chicago. To avoid possible interruption of the movement by rail and by marching through a part of the city, it may be advisable to bring them by steam-boat. Please consider

this matter and have the arrangements perfected without delay. You may expect orders at any time for the movement. Acknowledge receipt and report in what manner movement is to be made.

J. M. SCHOFIELD,
Major-General Commanding.

It should by no means be inferred from this despatch that it had been definitely determined that the use of a military force was inevitable. It was still hoped that the effect of the injunction would be such that this alternative might be avoided. A painful emergency is created when public duty forces the necessity of placing trained soldiers face to face with riotous opposition to the general Government, and an acute and determined defiance to law and order. This course, once entered upon, admits of no backward step; and an appreciation of the consequences that may ensue cannot fail to oppress those responsible for its adoption with sadly disturbing reflections. Nevertheless, it was perfectly plain that, whatever the outcome

might be, the situation positively demanded such precaution and preparation as would insure readiness and promptness in case the presence of a military force should finally be found necessary.

On the morning of the next day, July 3, the Attorney-General received a letter from Mr. Walker, the special counsel, in which, after referring to the issuance of the injunctions and setting forth that the marshal was engaged in serving them, he wrote:

I do not believe that the marshal and his deputies can protect the railroad companies in moving their trains, either freight or passenger, including, of course, the trains carrying United States mails. Possibly, however, the service of the writ of injunction will have a restraining influence upon Debs and other officers of the association. If it does not, from present appearances, I think it is the opinion of all that the orders of the court cannot be enforced except by the aid of the regular army.

Thereupon the Attorney-General immediately sent this despatch to the district attorney :

I trust use of United States troops will not be necessary. If it becomes necessary, they will be used promptly and decisively upon the justifying facts being certified to me. In such case, if practicable, let Walker and the marshal and United States judge join in statement as to the exigency.

A few hours afterward the following urgent and decisive despatch from the marshal, endorsed by a judge of the United States Court and the district attorney and special counsel, was received by the Attorney-General.

CHICAGO, Ill., July 3, 1894.

Hon. RICHARD OLNEY, *Attorney-General*,

Washington, D. C.:

When the injunction was granted yesterday, a mob of from two to three thousand held possession of a point in the city near the crossing of the

Rock Island by other roads, where they had already ditched a mail-train, and prevented the passing of any trains, whether mail or otherwise. I read the injunction writ to this mob and commanded them to disperse. The reading of the writ met with no response except jeers and hoots. Shortly after, the mob threw a number of baggage-cars across the track, since when no mail-train has been able to move. I am unable to disperse the mob, clear the tracks, or arrest the men who were engaged in the acts named, and believe that no force less than the regular troops of the United States can procure the passage of the mail-trains, or enforce the orders of the courts. I believe people engaged in trades are quitting employment to-day, and in my opinion will be joining the mob to-night and especially to-morrow; and it is my judgment that the troops should be here at the earliest moment. An emergency has arisen for their presence in this city. J. W. ARNOLD,

United States Marshal.

We have read the foregoing, and from that information, and other information that has

come to us, believe that an emergency exists for the immediate presence of United States troops.

P. S. GROSSCUP, *Judge*.

EDWIN WALKER,

THOMAS E. MILCHIST, } *Attys.*

In the afternoon of the same day the following order was telegraphed from army headquarters in the city of Washington:

WAR DEPARTMENT,

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 3, 1894,

4 o'clock P.M.

TO MARTIN, *Adjutant-General*,

Headquarters Department of Missouri,

Chicago, Ill.

It having become impracticable in the judgment of the President to enforce by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings the laws of the United States, you will direct Colonel Crofton to move his entire command at once to the city of Chicago (leaving the necessary guard at Fort Sheridan), there to execute the orders and

processes of the United States court, to prevent the obstruction of the United States mails, and generally to enforce the faithful execution of the laws of the United States. He will confer with the United States marshal, the United States district attorney, and Edwin Walker, special counsel. Acknowledge receipt and report action promptly. By order of the President.

J. M. SCHOFIELD, *Major-General*.

Immediately after this order was issued, the following despatch was sent to the district attorney by the Attorney-General:

Colonel Crofton's command ordered to Chicago by the President. As to disposition and movement of troops, yourself, Walker, and marshal should confer with Colonel Crofton and with Colonel Martin, adjutant-general at Chicago. While action should be prompt and decisive, it should of course be kept within the limits provided by the Constitution and laws. Rely upon yourself and Walker to see that this is done.

Colonel Martin, adjutant-general at Chicago, reported, the same night at half-past nine o'clock, that the order for the movement of troops was, immediately on its receipt by him, transmitted to Fort Sheridan, and that Colonel Crofton's command started for Chicago at nine o'clock.

During the forenoon of the next day, July 4, Colonel Martin advised the War Department that Colonel Crofton reported his command in the city of Chicago at 10:15 that morning. After referring to the manner in which the troops had been distributed, this officer added: "People seem to feel easier since arrival of troops."

General Miles, commanding the department, arrived in Chicago the same morning, and at once assumed direction of military movements. In the afternoon of that day he sent a report to the War Department at Washington, giving an account of the disposition of troops, recounting an unfavorable condition of affairs, and recommending an increase of the garrison at

Fort Sheridan sufficient to meet any emergency. In response to this despatch General Miles was immediately authorized to order six companies of infantry from Fort Leavenworth, in Kansas, and two companies from Fort Brady, in Michigan, to Fort Sheridan.

On the fifth day of July he reported that a mob of over two thousand had gathered that morning at the stock-yards, crowded among the troops, obstructed the movement of trains, knocked down a railroad official, and overturned about twenty freight-cars, which obstructed all freight and passenger traffic in the vicinity of the stock-yards, and that the mob had also derailed a passenger-train on the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad, and burned switches. To this recital of violent demonstrations he added the following statement :

The injunction of the United States court is openly defied, and unless the mobs are dispersed by the action of the police or they are fired upon

by United States troops, more serious trouble may be expected, as the mob is increasing and becoming more defiant.

In view of the situation as reported by General Miles, a despatch was sent to him by General Schofield directing him to concentrate his troops in order that they might act more effectively in the execution of orders theretofore given, and in the protection of United States property. This despatch concluded as follows:

The mere preservation of peace and good order in the city is, of course, the province of the city and state authorities.

The situation on the sixth day of July was thus described in a despatch sent in the afternoon of that day by General Miles to the Secretary of War:

In answer to your telegram, I report the following: Mayor Hopkins last night issued a proclamation prohibiting riotous assemblies and

directing the police to stop people from molesting railway communication. Governor Altgeld has ordered General Wheeler's brigade on duty in Chicago to support the Mayor's authority. So far, there have been no large mobs like the one of yesterday, which moved from 51st Street to 18th Street before it dispersed. The lawlessness has been along the line of the railways, destroying and burning more than one hundred cars and railway buildings, and obstructing transportation in various ways, even to the extent of cutting telegraph lines. United States troops have dispersed mobs at 51st Street, Kensington, and a company of infantry is moving along the Rock Island to support a body of United States marshals in making arrests for violating the injunction of the United States court. Of the twenty-three roads centering in Chicago, only six are unobstructed in freight, passenger, and mail transportation. Thirteen are at present entirely obstructed, and ten are running only mail- and passenger-trains. Large numbers of trains moving in and out of the city have been stoned and fired upon by mobs, and one engineer killed.

There was a secret meeting to-day of Debs and the representatives of labor unions considering the advisability of a general strike of all labor unions. About one hundred men were present at that meeting. The result is not yet known. United States troops are at the stock-yards, Kensington, Blue Island, crossing of 51st Street, and have been moving along some of the lines: the balance, eight companies of infantry, battery of artillery, and one troop of cavalry, are camped on Lake Front Park, ready for any emergency and to protect Government buildings and property. It is learned from the Fire Department, City Hall, that a party of strikers has been going through the vicinity from 14th to 41st streets and Stewart Avenue freight-yards, throwing gasoline on freight-cars all through that section. Captain Ford, of the Fire Department, was badly stoned this morning. Troops have just dispersed a mob of incendiaries on Fort Wayne tracks, near 51st Street, and fires that were started have been suppressed. Mob just captured mail-train at 47th Street, and troops sent to disperse them.

On the eighth day of July, in view of the apparently near approach of a crisis which the Government had attempted to avoid, the following Executive Proclamation was issued and at once extensively published in the city of Chicago:

Whereas, by reason of unlawful obstruction, combinations and assemblages of persons, it has become impracticable, in the judgment of the President, to enforce, by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, the laws of the United States within the State of Illinois, and especially in the city of Chicago within said State; and

Whereas, for the purpose of enforcing the faithful execution of the laws of the United States and protecting its property and removing obstructions to the United States mails in the State and city aforesaid, the President has employed a part of the military forces of the United States:—

Now, therefore, I, Grover Cleveland, President of the United States, do hereby admonish all good citizens, and all persons who may be or may

come within the City and State aforesaid, against aiding, countenancing, encouraging, or taking any part in such unlawful obstructions, combinations, and assemblages; and I hereby warn all persons engaged in or in any way connected with such unlawful obstructions, combinations, and assemblages to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes on or before twelve o'clock noon of the 9th day of July instant.

Those who disregard this warning and persist in taking part with a riotous mob in forcibly resisting and obstructing the execution of the laws of the United States, or interfering with the functions of the Government, or destroying or attempting to destroy the property belonging to the United States or under its protection, cannot be regarded otherwise than as public enemies.

Troops employed against such a riotous mob will act with all the moderation and forbearance consistent with the accomplishment of the desired end; but the stern necessities that confront them will not with certainty permit discrimination between guilty participants and those who are mingling with them from curiosity and without

criminal intent. The only safe course, therefore, for those not actually participating, is to abide at their homes, or at least not to be found in the neighborhood of riotous assemblages.

While there will be no vacillation in the decisive treatment of the guilty, this warning is especially intended to protect and save the innocent.

On the 10th of July, Eugene V. Debs, the president of the American Railway Union, together with its vice-president, general secretary, and one other who was an active director, were arrested upon indictments found against them for complicity in the obstruction of mails and interstate commerce. Three days afterward our special counsel expressed the opinion that the strike was practically broken. This must not be taken to mean, however, that peace and quiet had been completely restored or that the transportation of mails and the activities of interstate commerce were entirely free from interruption. It was only the expression of a well-sustained and deliberate ex-

pectation that the combination of measures already inaugurated, and others contemplated in the near future, would speedily bring about a termination of the difficulty.

On the seventeenth day of July an information was filed in the United States Circuit Court at Chicago against Debs and the three other officials of the Railway Union who had been arrested on indictment a few days before, but were then at large on bail. This information alleged that these parties had been guilty of open, continued, and defiant disobedience of the injunction which was served on them July 3, forbidding them to do certain specified acts tending to incite and aid the obstruction of the carriage of mails and the operation of interstate commerce. On the footing of this information these parties were brought before the court to show cause why they should not be punished for contempt in disobeying the injunction. Instead of giving bail for their freedom pending the investigation of this charge against them, as they were invited to do, they

preferred to be committed to custody—perhaps intending by such an act of martyrdom either to revive a waning cause, or to gain a plausible and justifying excuse for the collapse of their already foredoomed movement. Debs himself, in speaking of this event afterward, said: “As soon as the employees found that we were arrested and taken from the scene of action they became demoralized, and that ended the strike.”

That the strike ended about the time of this second arrest is undoubtedly true; for, during the few days immediately preceding and following the seventeenth day of July, reports came from nearly all the localities to which the strike had spread, indicating its defeat and the accomplishment of all the purposes of the Government's interference. The successful assertion of national authority was conclusively indicated when on the twentieth day of July the last of the soldiers of the United States who had been ordered for duty at the very center of opposition and disturbance, were

withdrawn from Chicago and returned to the military posts to which they were attached.

I hope I have been successful thus far in my effort satisfactorily to exhibit the extensive reach and perilous tendency of the convulsion under consideration, the careful promptness which characterized the interference of the Government, the constant desire of the national administration to avoid extreme measures, the scrupulous limitation of its interference to purposes which were clearly within its constitutional competency and duty, and the gratifying and important results of its conservative but stern activity.

I must not fail to mention here as part of the history of this perplexing affair, a contribution made by the governor of Illinois to its annoyances. This official not only refused to regard the riotous disturbances within the borders of his State as a sufficient cause for an application to the Federal Government for its protection "against domestic violence" under the mandate of the Constitution, but he ac-

tually protested against the presence of Federal troops sent into the State upon the general Government's own initiative and for the purpose of defending itself in the exercise of its well-defined legitimate functions.

On the fifth day of July, twenty-four hours after our soldiers had been brought to the city of Chicago, pursuant to the order of July 3d, I received a long despatch from Governor Altgeld, beginning as follows:

I am advised that you have ordered Federal troops to go into service in the State of Illinois. Surely the facts have not been correctly presented to you in this case or you would not have taken the step; for it is entirely unnecessary and, as it seems to me, unjustifiable. Waiving all question of courtesy, I will say that the State of Illinois is not only able to take care of itself, but it stands ready to-day to furnish the Federal Government any assistance it may need elsewhere.

This opening sentence was followed by a lengthy statement which so far missed actual

conditions as to appear irrelevant, and, in some parts, absolutely frivolous.

This remarkable despatch closed with the following words :

As Governor of the State of Illinois, I protest against this and ask the immediate withdrawal of Federal troops from active duty in this State. Should the situation at any time get so serious that we cannot control it with the State forces, we will promptly and freely ask for Federal assistance ; but until such time I protest with all due deference against this uncalled-for reflection upon our people, and again ask for the immediate withdrawal of these troops.

Immediately upon the receipt of this communication, I sent to Governor Altgeld the following reply :

Federal troops were sent to Chicago in strict accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the United States, upon the demand of the Post-Office Department that obstructions of the mails

should be removed, and upon the representation of the judicial officers of the United States that process of the Federal courts could not be executed through the ordinary means, and upon abundant proof that conspiracies existed against commerce between the States. To meet these conditions, which are clearly within the province of Federal authority, the presence of Federal troops in the city of Chicago was deemed not only proper but necessary; and there has been no intention of thereby interfering with the plain duty of the local authorities to preserve the peace of the city.

III

In response to this the governor, evidently unwilling to allow the matter at issue between us to rest without a renewal of argument and protest, at once addressed to me another long telegraphic communication, evidently intended to be more severely accusatory and insistent than its predecessor. Its general tenor may be inferred from the opening words :

Your answer to my protest involves some startling conclusions, and ignores and evades the question at issue—that is, that the principle of local self-government is just as fundamental in our institutions as is that of Federal supremacy. You calmly assume that the Executive has the legal right to order Federal troops into any community of the United States in the first instance, whenever there is the slightest disturbance, and that he can do this without any regard to the

question as to whether the community is able to and ready to enforce the law itself.

After a rather dreary discussion of the importance of preserving the rights of the States and a presentation of the dangers to constitutional government that lurked in the course that had been pursued by the general Government, this communication closed as follows:

Inasmuch as the Federal troops can do nothing but what the State troops can do there, and believing that the State is amply able to take care of the situation and to enforce the law, and believing that the ordering out of the Federal troops was unwarranted, I again ask their withdrawal.

I confess that my patience was somewhat strained when I quickly sent the following despatch in reply to this communication:

EXECUTIVE MANSION.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 6, 1894.

While I am still persuaded that I have neither

transcended my authority nor duty in the emergency that confronts us, it seems to me that in this hour of danger and public distress, discussion may well give way to active efforts on the part of all in authority to restore obedience to law and to protect life and property.

GROVER CLEVELAND.

HON. JOHN P. ALTGELD,
Governor of Illinois.

This closed a discussion which in its net results demonstrated how far one's disposition and inclination will lead him astray in the field of argument.

I shall conclude the treatment of my subject by a brief reference to the legal proceedings which grew out of this disturbance, and finally led to an adjudication by the highest court in our land, establishing in an absolutely authoritative manner and for all time the power of the national Government to protect itself in the exercise of its functions.

It will be recalled that in the course of our

narrative we left Mr. Debs, the president of the Railway Union, and his three associates in custody of the law, on the seventeenth day of July, awaiting an investigation of the charge of contempt of court made against them, based upon their disobedience of the writs of injunction forbidding them to do certain things in aid or encouragement of interference with mail transportation or interstate commerce.

This investigation was so long delayed that the decision of the Circuit Court before which the proceedings were pending was not rendered until the fourteenth day of December, 1894. On that date the court delivered an able and carefully considered decision finding Debs and his associates guilty of contempt of court, basing its decision upon the provisions of the law of Congress, passed in 1890, entitled: "An act to protect trade and commerce against unlawful restraint and monopolies"; sometimes called the Sherman Anti-Trust Law. Thereupon the parties were sentenced on said conviction to confinement in the county jail for

terms varying from three to six months. Afterward, and on the 14th day of January, 1895, the prisoners applied to the Supreme Court of the United States for a writ of habeas corpus to relieve them from imprisonment, on the ground that the facts found against them by the Circuit Court did not constitute disobedience of the writs of injunction and that their commitment in the manner and for the reasons alleged was without justification and not within the constitutional power and jurisdiction of that tribunal.

On this application, the case was elaborately argued before the Supreme Court in March, 1895; and on the twenty-seventh day of May, 1895, the court rendered its decision, upholding on the broadest grounds the proceedings of the Circuit Court and confirming its adjudication and the commitment to jail of the petitioners thereupon.

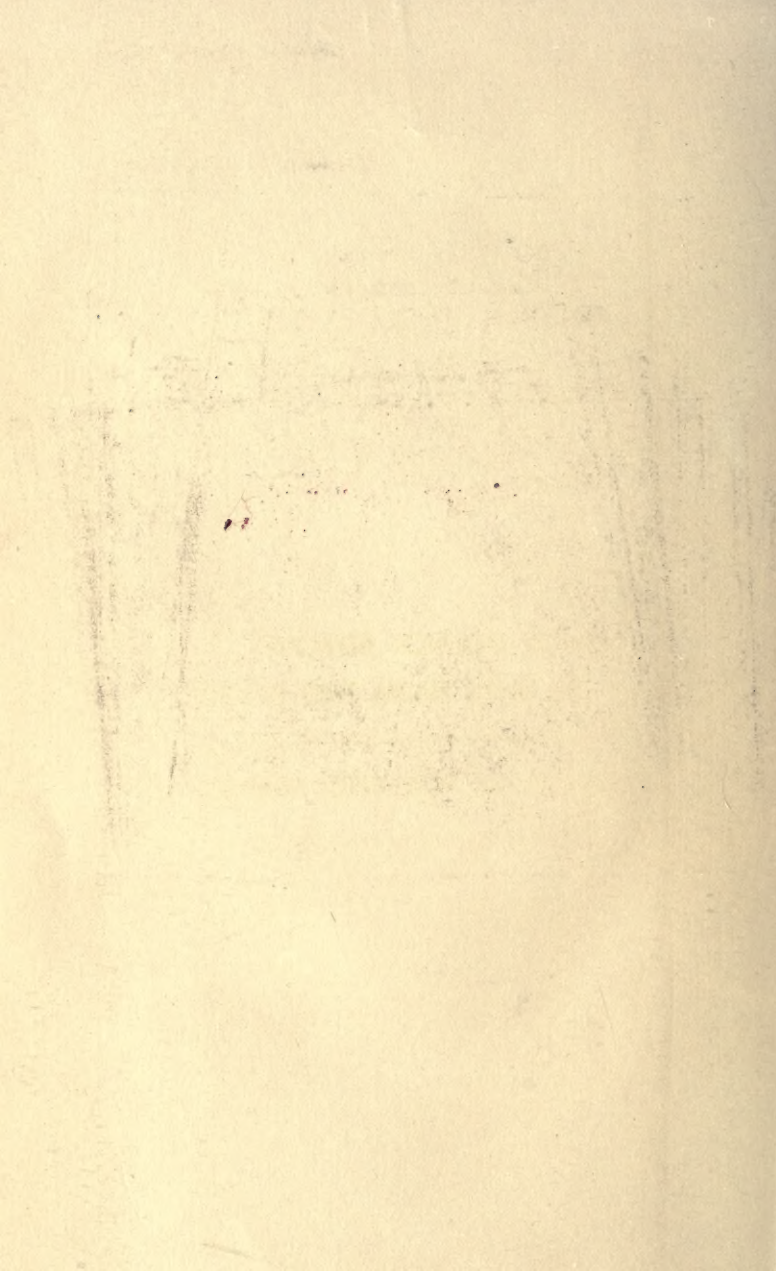
Justice Brewer, in delivering the unanimous opinion of the Supreme Court, stated the case as follows:

The United States, finding that the interstate transportation of persons and property, as well as the carriage of mails, is forcibly obstructed, and that a combination and conspiracy exists to subject the control of such transportation to the will of the conspirators, applied to one of their courts sitting as a court of equity, for an injunction to restrain such obstructions and prevent carrying into effect such conspiracy. Two questions of importance are presented: First, are the relations of the general Government to interstate commerce and the transportation of the mails such as to authorize a direct interference to prevent a forcible obstruction thereof? Second, if authority exists,—as authority in governmental affairs implies both power and duty,—has a court of equity jurisdiction to issue an injunction in aid of the performance of such duty?

Both of these questions were answered by the court in the affirmative; and in the opinion read by the learned justice, the inherent power of the Government to execute the powers and functions belonging to it by means of physical

force through its official agents, and on every foot of American soil, was amply vindicated by a process of reasoning simple, logical, unhampered by fanciful distinctions, and absolutely conclusive; and the Government's peaceful resort to the court, the injunction issued in its aid, and all the proceedings thereon, including the imprisonment of Debs and his associates, were fully approved.

Thus the Supreme Court of the United States has written the closing words of this history, tragical in many of its details, and in every line provoking sober reflection. As we gratefully turn its concluding page, those who were most nearly related by executive responsibility to the troublous days whose story is told may well especially congratulate themselves on the part which fell to them in marking out the way and clearing the path, now unchangeably established, which shall hereafter guide our nation safely and surely in the exercise of the important functions which represent the people's trust.



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Cleveland, Grover
The government in the
Chicago Strike of 1894

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